

i get a kind of grouching and grumbling
from the other end of the line.
"hello?" i say; "anybody there?"

"mr. locklin," the voice announces,
"this is jim w., your roofing contractor."

TACO DUMBBELL

i'm already notorious with my kids
for driving up to the window of mc donald's
paying,
and immediately driving off without the food.

this happens with embarrassing frequency.

but today i outdid myself.

my son and i spent an interminable wait
in the drive-through line at taco bell.
but when i finally got to the microphone
i had something else on my mind
and i drove right past it.

"dad," my son asked, "did you forget to order?"

of course there was already another car
ordering at the microphone behind us.

it wasn't fun explaining all this
to the blank-faced teenage girl at the window.

R.B. KITAJ: WHO CAN BE HAPPY AND FREE?, 1990-93

do women feel that their clothes
are transparent to us?
do they really fear it,
as so many say they do?

do they, in their turn,
think of our hidden penises?
do they think of them erect,
or do they think of taking them,
soft, in hand, and watching the power
they have to make them rise?

do we not feel this way
about our touching of their nipples,
our biting of their necks,
our breathing into their ears,
our reaching into their panties?

is not the greatest pleasure,
for women or for men,
the excitation of the other?

is this the tragic difference between
the fantasy of rape and its reality?

observe the lonely man
left out of the scene,
his palms and face pressed against
an invisible wall.
who has not known that wall?

is a penis a cigar?

are a bed and a book
always in the phantom background?

do only those we do not want
press their attentions on us?

is sex inaccurately symbolized
by the color red?

does it astonish us
when the right two
want each other?

and then, what of the static and the
necessary clutter?

CRAZY JANE TALKS TO THE TOAD

he is exiting the ymca
as she is entering it.
she stops in the doorway,
so he is holding the door open for her

"why," she demands, "did they lock
the door for the single women?"
he says, "there's a separate door
for the single women?"
"why would they lock it?" the
woman repeats; "why would they lock
the door for the single women?"

he is still holding the door open
so that it doesn't slam on her.
"single women use this place also,"
she says.
"i'm sure they do," he says.